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HISTORY
OF
ANCIENT MANUSCRIPTS.

A LECTURE
DELIVERED IN
THE HALL OF THE INNER TEMPLE.

BY
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Treasurer of the Inn.

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E see on our shelves, in handsome Volumes, the Works of old Authors who lived and wrote before the invention of printing ; but how few of us ask ourselves the questions, Where are the originals of which these books are the copies ? And what authority have we for the genuineness of the text ? Take, for instance, the Classic Authors of Greece and Rome. As might be expected, from the perishable nature of such materials as parchment and paper, not more than a few fragments of manuscripts which are older than the Christian era now survive. If, then, the originals of these works are lost, what

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guarantee have we for the genuineness of the printed copies in our libraries? So impressed was the Abbé Hardouin, born in 1646, with this difficulty, that he gravely propounded the theory that the so-called works of the classic writers of Greece and Rome were nothing but forgeries of the monks—just as Chatterton tried to pass off his own writings as the poems of Rowley, which he pretended to have found in some old manuscripts in a chest which I have seen in the tower of the Church of St. Mary's Redcliffe, at Bristol. The Abbé affected to believe that the so-called ancient classics had been composed in the thirteenth century, by the help of the remains of Cicero and Pliny, the Georgics of Virgil, and the Satires and Epistles of Horace, which he declared were the only relics of antiquity that had come down to that period.* He attributed the *Æneid* to a

* In an epitaph written upon the Abbé, by Vernet, of Geneva, he is called :

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Benedictine Monk, who wished to describe in an allegory, the journey of St. Peter to Rome. It is, indeed, difficult to believe that this was not a literary joke; but the Abbé seems to have been thoroughly in earnest, and if so, it appears not to have struck him that there is such a thing as internal evidence and moral impossibility. The idea of mediæval monks being able to compose the works of Homer and of Plato; of Cicero and of Virgil; does not deserve repetition. We shall, by-and-by, see how in reality it was that long after the revival of letters many of the ancient manuscripts, containing the writings of the classics, were recovered or restored; but it must be borne in mind that even those ancient documents are not the originals, but only copies of some one or more manuscripts

Venerandæ antiquitatis cultor et depredator.

Scepticum pîd egit,

Credulitate puer,

Audaciâ juvenis,

Deliriis senex,

Verbo dicam, hic jacet Harduinus.

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now utterly and for ever lost to mankind. I say "some one or more manuscripts," for consider what must have happened when a man set down to write a book before the invention of printing. Let us suppose him to have lived in the time of Augustus, and to have been a Poet or an Historian. He would commit his thoughts either to a waxen tablet or to a papyrus or parchment roll, and this would strictly and properly be the only original. But clever slaves were kept as scribes, whose sole business it was to multiply copies of their master's works, and so far as this was done, under his supervision, such copies may fairly be considered entitled to rank as originals. But none of these exist now, they have all disappeared, swallowed up in the gulf of time—and speaking loosely, but with sufficient accuracy for our present purpose, we may assume that the oldest MS., containing the supposed poems or history, is not earlier than the sixth century,—that is to say, there is a gap

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of 500 years between their first appearance in the world and their appearance to us in the shape of a MS., which, however clean and fresh and bright when originally written twelve centuries ago, is now dirty and dusty and worm-eaten, and very probably mutilated and torn.

But next comes the question : As we are not likely to adopt the Abbé Hardouin's theory, and assume that the work in question was the forgery of a clever monk, we ask, What was the original which the writer had before him when he made the copy, and what has become of it? As to the latter part of the question I fear we must answer it by saying that it has become dust and ashes—either wilfully or accidentally destroyed or crumbled into nothingness by the slow process of decay. Nor can we in most cases even guess what the identical MS. was of which our *existing* MS. is a copy. By this I mean that unless the writer has happened to furnish the information, which is, I believe, very seldom, we cannot tell

what was the date of the MS. which he had before him when he made our existing copy. Most probably, or, indeed, almost certainly, that was itself a copy of an older document which was also a copy, and so on until we reach in imagination the first original MS. which appeared on the shelves of the Soffi—the Murrays and the Longmans of ancient Rome.

There are, I believe, about fifteen known manuscripts of the History of Herodotus, one of the oldest of which is in the library of Emmanuel College, Cambridge; but I do not think that its age is put higher than the tenth century, and it cannot be compared in antiquity with the Virgil of the Vatican, which is supposed to have been written in the fifth century. The older manuscripts from which these have been copied are all destroyed, and on these we must rely, after a critical collation of other manuscripts of later dates, for the purity and accuracy of the printed text.

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So far, then, as external evidence goes, we start with a MS. of, let us say, the sixth century, although that is exceedingly old, and we want to know what guarantee we have of its authenticity and genuineness? By authenticity is meant that the original work was really written by the author whose name it bears; and by genuineness that the account it purports to give is *bond fide* and not a forgery.

Now, if the work in question is one which was little known and never quoted by contemporary writers at the time of or soon after its first appearance, it is obvious that we have no guarantee for either its authenticity or genuineness, except such as is afforded by the internal evidence of style, or our faith in the honesty of the unknown copyist to whom we owe the existence of the MS. we possess. And if this MS. is the *only* one that exists we have no other means of testing its truthfulness, and we must take it on trust for what it purports to be. I

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need not say that many forgeries have been perpetrated which imposed upon the simplicity of former ages, but which have been detected and exposed by the critical acumen of later times. Amongst these, perhaps, the most notable and startling—as they have certainly been the most important in their consequences—have been the pretended Donation of Constantine forged in the eighth century, the Isidorian Decretals in the ninth, and Gratian's Decretum in the twelfth, of which you will find a full account in the work called “The Popes and the Council, by Janus,” attributed to Dr. Döllinger.

A curious instance, not exactly of forgery, but of an absolute mistake, occurred in the case of a MS. preserved in the Arsenal Library at Paris, which was supposed to contain some hieroglyphics of the Red-Skin Indians in America, and was brought from that country in the last century. Quite recently a facsimile of this document was published by the Abbé Domenech, in the belief

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that it was genuine, but it is believed to be nothing but the fantastic production of some German schoolboy, whose parents were settled in the States, and who scrawled in sport the figures which were taken for a picture language.

The case, however, is different with works which from the first have enjoyed a considerable reputation, and have been often quoted by several writers. For we have two distinct kinds of evidence in their favour. First, we can compare the quotations which are scattered throughout other manuscripts on other subjects which purport to cite passages from the works in question, and see whether the particular MS. before us corresponds. And, secondly, we generally have a variety of manuscripts, all purporting to contain the same identical work, so that we can by comparing, or as it is called by collating, these together, come to a tolerably just conclusion as to the genuineness of the manuscripts. It is inconceivable that there should be

simultaneous forgeries of the same work at different places widely separated from each other, and equally inconceivable that the quotations from a particular work in other manuscripts, which treat of different subjects, should agree, unless the writers had access to the same documents—or at all events documents of which each was a correct copy of one original.

In illustration of this I may take the case of the Homeric text. The first printed edition of the Iliad and Odyssey was taken from manuscripts which were comparatively modern. Lately, however, much older papyri have been discovered containing more or less of the text, and some of these were written *before* the commencement of the Christian era. And yet what do we find? The printed text in our books agrees with the written text in these ancient records that have been sleeping the sleep of centuries in forgotten corners of monasteries; and this proves to demonstration that what we cherish as the all-but-inspired poetry

of Homer is the same as that which charmed the Greeks more than two thousand years ago.

A moment's consideration will show you how these remarks apply to the case of the four Gospels and other books of the New Testament. Thus St. Augustine, in his reply to Faustus, reminds him that whoever had first attempted a corruption of the Scriptures, would have immediately been confuted by a multitude of ancient manuscripts which were in the hands of all Christians. And Irenæus, who wrote at the end of the second century of our era, refers in his work on the Gnostic heresies to about 400 passages in the Gospels just as we have them now.

As I am addressing a legal audience, and men who are accustomed to deal with evidence, I need hardly point out that no multiplication of manuscripts adds anything to their authority, if they are all shown to have been derived from the same original. So long as that original exists *in rerum natura*, it is the primary evidence, and the copies

add no more to its weight than the repetition of hear-say gossip adds to the weight of an original statement. But the unlearned public are apt to forget this, and to fancy that mere repetition of itself gives authority. Of course, if the original has ceased to exist, and we find a number of independent manuscripts concurring in agreement, we have a perfect right to assume that there has been such an original which has disappeared; for the contrary hypothesis would involve the absurdity of supposing that a number of different men in the middle ages in different parts of Europe had either conspired together to produce a forgery, or had, by a miracle, all hit upon exactly the same composition. I need not stop to illustrate this, but just fancy a dozen mediæval monks sitting down in separate monasteries and producing each out of his own head, or even in concert, the Republic of Plato or the *Æneid* of Virgil!

There is one point to be noticed of great

importance as regards the difference between manuscripts and printed books in considering the question of accuracy of text. When an edition of a book is *printed*, each copy is a perfect *fac-simile* of the other ; and if we know the contents of one, we know the contents of all. They are like coins of the same value with the same stamp and all of the same currency. But not so in the case of manuscripts. What assurance have we that a number of them purporting to be copies of the same original are really exact copies ? This of course must depend upon the skill, care, and honesty of every individual transcriber, and the question can only be determined by a careful collation of them with the original, if it exists—or if not, then by comparing them all together and ascertaining how far they agree and in what particulars they differ. It does not follow because a book is printed from an ancient MS. that we have the genuine or even the best text. It may happen that the editor was uncritical or

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careless, or he may not have chosen the most trustworthy out of several manuscripts purporting to contain the same work, or he may not have properly collated them where they differ. I may mention as an example Bracton's great work, the first printed edition of which was published in folio in 1569. The anonymous editor says that he had compared and used several manuscripts. But for reasons which I cannot now explain, owing to the narrow limits within which I must confine myself, it is tolerably certain that manuscripts of Bracton exist which that ancient editor never saw—and in order to ascertain whether we might not have a better and more accurate text of the author of *De Legibus et Consuetudinibus Angliæ*, it would be necessary to collate all these and reject errors which are due to the carelessness and mistakes of transcribers.

All who have copied writings know how easy it is to make such mistakes, and the immense

number of various readings which are found in various manuscripts, all purporting to be copies of the same work, show how frequently errors have crept in. And it is one of the most interesting of literary tasks to eliminate these errors, and get a pure and perfect text. It may seem rather paradoxical to assert it, but it is nevertheless true, that the correction of the mistakes of copyists has been almost reduced to a science—and there are certain canons of criticism which enable the student of ancient manuscripts to determine with tolerable accuracy what are mistakes, and also the mode in which they have found their way into the text.

I will mention what are known to be the chief sources of error.

(1) Imperfections in the original MS. which would cause different copyists to supply the defective words or lines from their own conjectures, and as it may be assumed that each conjecture makes sense of the passage, we get a

variety of readings of which it is often very difficult to ascertain the true one.

(2) A transcriber might have the original read out to him, and he might mistake the sound of a word—or the reader might mispronounce the word.

(3) A transcriber might mistake similar letters. Thus in copying Greek characters, he might easily mistake O for Θ, T for Γ, and I believe that in Hebrew the chances of mistakes of this kind are much greater. In the 2nd Book of Kings, chap. xx. verse 12, we have the name of the King of Babylon written Berodach—but in the 39th chap. of Isaiah it is written Merodach.

(4) A transcriber might mistake a contraction of which there are many in the ancient Greek manuscripts. An instance of this is supposed to occur in Romans xii. 11, where for τω Κυριω, “the Lord,” three manuscripts read τω Καιρω, “the time;” the contraction being $\overline{\text{K}\omega}$ which would stand for either word.

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(5) As the text of the oldest manuscripts had no divisions between the letters, and all the words run into each other, it would be very easy to make a wrong division, so as to form wrong words. And in illustration of this I may mention a very amusing *jeu d'esprit* which I once saw of the late Sir George Cornwall Lewis, who, to ridicule the fanciful conjectures of the Egyptologists, wrote in the old style without any division between the words, the famous nursery rhymes :

Heydiddlethecatandthefiddleth
ecowjumpedoverthemoonthelit
tledoglaughedtoseesuchsportandt
hedishranawaywiththespoon.

And in an ingenious Latin essay he pretended to make out that this was a sacred inscription in some ancient language—of which, if I recollect right, the first word “Hey” was a form of the word Θεός, or God.

(6) A transcriber would be very apt to fix a

short passage in his memory and then write it down, but in so doing he might easily substitute a synonymous word or sentence. An instance of this is given by Michaelis in Rev. xvii. 17, where for *τελεσθη τα ρηματα*, seven manuscripts have *τελεσθησονται οι λογοι*, which has of course exactly the same meaning.

(7) When the same word stands in different places in a page or a passage, a copyist who has, for the purpose of writing, taken his eye off the MS., may easily on next looking at the text catch with his eye the later of the same two words, and thinking it to be the one down to which he has already written, he will proceed in his work and will in reality have omitted the intervening passage. An instance of this almost undoubtedly occurs in Judges xvi. 13, and another in the Codex Alexandrinus, where in 1 Cor. vi. 2—6, because *ελαχιστων* ends ver. 2, and *απιστων* ends ver. 6, the whole of the text lying between these two words is omitted, the

eye of the transcriber having passed from the first *ιστω* to the second.

I might mention several other sources of error of a like kind; but time presses, and I will specify only one more, which is a very fertile cause of mistake, and that is the assumption of marginal glosses into the text. One copyist would give in the margin of his MS. his explanation of a difficult passage, and another following him would suppose this to have been a part of the original work accidentally omitted and incorporate it in the text.

As an instance of the way in which error thus creeps in—and is proved to be an error—I may mention the verse relating to the three Heavenly Witnesses in the Epistle of St. John (i., v. 7). This is universally admitted by all Biblical scholars to be spurious: but why? In the first place it is nowhere quoted by the great controversial writers of the fourth and fifth century, which is inconceivable if it was known to them

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and considered to be genuine. Secondly, its origin is betrayed not only by its varieties of form in different Latin manuscripts, but also by the fact that it occurs sometimes before and sometimes after the mention of the three witnesses—"the spirit, and the water, and the blood"—which it was no doubt intended to explain. The truth is, that it was the gloss of some copyist, who wished to give a theological interpretation to the three witnesses, and it was afterwards by mistake incorporated in the text. But in our early Bibles, such as Tyndale's and Coverdale's, the spurious words are placed in brackets, and printed in a different type; while in Luther's German translation of the Bible, and in the Zurich Latin Bible of 1543, they were wholly omitted. I believe that they were first printed uniformly with the rest of the context in the Bishops' Bible, and our authorised version followed the bad precedent.

The verse is not found in any of the existing

Uncial manuscripts which are always the oldest, but it is found in some of the *Curſive* manuscripts which are, as we know, of a later date. Nor is it found in any old versions except the Latin; not in the Philoxenian, Thebaic, Æthiopic, or Arabic, and where it does occur, it is met with in such a variety of forms and changes of position that Porſon was justified in ſaying that a paſſage which changes ſhapes faſter than Proteus or Empuſa may fairly warrant a diſbelief in its genuinenefs.

We muſt not, however, be too much alarmed by this array of poſſible cauſes of error—for as I ſaid before the acutenefs of modern criticiſm can generally detect corruptions. And it has been truly ſaid that there is perhaps more probability that genuine paſſages of ancient authors ſhould fall under ſuſpicion, than that any actually ſpurious portions ſhould entirely eſcape it. You will find ſome uſeful remarks as to determining the real date of a MS. even where the

writer has through carelessness or from any other cause mis-stated it, in Kemble's Introduction to his *Codex Diplomaticus Ævi Saxonici*, or Collections of Anglo-Saxon Charters and Wills (Introduct. vol. i. p. lxvii., *et seq.*).

The most ancient materials used for writing upon were stone and metal; and, strictly speaking, these are "manuscripts," because written upon with the hand. I need hardly remind you of the Tables of Stone which Moses brought down from the Mount, and the cuneiform inscriptions at Nineveh brought to light by Mr. Layard. Herodotus mentions a letter engraved on stone plates, which Themistocles sent to the Ionians, about 500 years B.C.; and we have ample proofs of the custom in the Behistun and Damietta stones, and the different tablets of brass which have been found containing laws and decrees and public records. I have seen on the Acropolis of Athens a marble column which is covered with ancient writing, as old, perhaps, as

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the time of Pericles. The laws of Solon are said to have been inscribed on blocks of wood ; but that material is too perishable to stand the wear and tear of time.

But at a later period, and for ordinary purposes, both the Greeks and the Romans used waxen tablets and vellum and papyrus, and paper manufactured from cotton.

Of each of these I may say rapidly a few words. (1) The *tabulæ* were thin oblong pieces of wood covered over with wax, with raised margins or little projecting knobs at the corners to prevent them from cohering, and so obliterating what was written on the wax by means of a sharp pointed instrument of bone or ivory, or wood or metal, called a *stilus* ; hence the modern word "style." I have seen a great number of these in one of the libraries or museums in Italy—I think at Rome. And most perishable as the *tabulæ* were, two are said to have been discovered in a perfect state of preservation in some gold

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mines in Transylvania; but they have on good grounds been pronounced to be forgeries. I believe that there is another (most probably also spurious) at Berne in Switzerland, which I tried to see, but was unable to do so, owing to the accidental absence of the librarian.

Waxen tablets continued to be used in the Middle Ages; but the oldest of these now extant is not earlier than the year 1301 A.D., and is preserved in the Museum at Florence.

(2) Vellum or parchment is said to have been invented by Eumenes, King of Pergamos, in Asia Minor, and hence its name. It was manufactured, as at present, from the skins of animals, of which that of the ass is the softest and finest. The ancients usually wrote on only one side of the parchment, and the other was stained with saffron colour or the cedrus. It was generally formed into a long roll, and wrapped round a stick, whence it was called *volumen*. At each end of the stick were balls or bosses, called *um-*

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bilici or *cornua*, just as we see in the mounted maps sold at the present day.

(3) The papyrus was an Egyptian rush or reed, out of which paper was manufactured; and in the time of Augustus there were eight manufactories of this at Rome. It was often formed into the shape of a *volumen*, but sometimes divided into leaves like a modern book, which was called a *codex*.

(4) Paper was also manufactured from cotton (*Charta Bombycina*), which the Germans call by the expressive name of *Baumwoll* or Tree-wool, but the material is very perishable; and the use of linen rags for the purpose was wholly unknown to the ancients. Indeed they did not understand the manufacture of flax at all, even if they possessed the plant.

In one of De Quincey's Essays he starts what will be considered a paradox, when he asserts that the art of printing was discovered by the ancients. He says: "It had been discovered repeatedly.

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“ The art which multiplied the legends upon a
“ coin or medal had, in effect, anticipated the
“ art of printing. It was an art, this typogra-
“ phic mystery, which awoke and went to sleep
“ many times over from mere defect of mate-
“ rials. Not the defect of typography as an art,
“ but the defect of *paper* as a material for keep-
“ ing this art in motion. There lies the reason,
“ as Dr. Whately most truly observes, why
“ printed books had no existence amongst the
“ Greeks of Pericles, or afterwards amongst
“ the Romans of Cicero. And why was there
“ no paper? The common reason, applying
“ to both countries, was the want of linen rags,
“ and that want arose from the universal habit
“ of wearing woollen garments. . . . How
“ desperate, he continues, must have been the
“ bankruptcy at Athens in all materials for
“ receiving the records of thoughts, when we
“ find a polished people having no better
“ tickets or cards for conveying their senti-

“ments to the public than shells.” From this we all know came the word *ostracism*, for civil banishment, because the votes were marked on an *ostrakon* or shell. And I may mention that there are in the British Museum tickets of admission to the gladiatorial shows just like tickets of admission to our theatres, only they consist of little oblong pieces of lead, some of which, at the request of Professor Schlitzl, I had impressed on india-rubber and sent to him at Bonn, as he wished to use them for his great work on the *History of the Latin Language*. For this trifling service he has paid me, in his Latin preface, a very undeserved compliment ; but he said that he was much puzzled to know how to designate me as Queen’s Counsel in that language.

The use of writing in Greece for the purposes of public historical registration was very limited until the sixth century before Christ. Thucydides describes the Athenians as knowing the history of their country during the period of Pisistratus

and his sons by hearsay accounts; that is, oral tradition, and not from written documents. We all know that the collection and arrangement of the Homeric poems have been attributed by antiquity to Solon, and Pisistratus assisted by his sons. They flourished about 550 B.C. But whether these poems existed previously in manuscript, or were preserved solely by the recitations of the *Rhapsodoi*, is a question which, since the appearance of the Prolegomena of the German critic Wolf at the end of the last century, has been keenly debated by able scholars. And what are we to think of Lycurgus, who is said to have introduced the "Iliad" into Sparta more than two centuries before? Is it possible to believe that he got hold of a copy at a time when the art of writing, except in the rudest form, seems to have been unknown?

A few notices of the use of writing at Rome, prior to the conflagration of the city by the Gauls in the year 390 B.C., occur in the old

historians. Amongst these I may mention the forged letters of Sextus Tarquin, at Gabii, attributed to him by Dionysius of Halicarnassus (IV. 57), and the written copy of a law prepared by a tribune in the time of Coriolanus. Appius, the Decemvir, is said to have sent a letter to the camp, and we know the story that he first saw the young Virginia—his unhappy victim—in a school near the Forum. In that most learned and valuable work on the *Credibility of Early Roman History*, by Sir George Cornewall Lewis—where, however, perhaps he has pushed historical scepticism a little too far—he sums up the result of a laborious inquiry on the subject of the Public Records of the Roman State in the two following propositions:—

(1) That little use was made of the art of writing at Rome for the contemporary registration of historical events before the year 390 B.C., the date of the capture of the city by the Gauls.

(2) That such historical records as existed at

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the time, whether public or private, for the most part perished in the conflagration of the city.

The Romans understood the art of embellishing their books, *i.e.*, their manuscripts, with portraits—which, however, were *not* photographs. Pliny mentions that Varro wrote the lives of 700 illustrious Romans, which he enriched with their portraits. And we learn from Cornelius Nepos that Atticus, the friend of Cicero,

“The Roman friend of Rome’s least mortal mind,”

was the author of a work on the actions of the great men of Rome, which he ornamented with their portraits.

There is one curious fact to notice with respect to the manuscripts of Rome, which is, that they were sometimes written in short-hand, to which the term Stenography has been given. There were no reporters employed in Ancient Rome; but on the occasion of the discovery of the conspiracy of Catiline, Cicero directed four of the

Senators to take down the questions and answers, and the statements of the informers.

Indeed, the introduction of the art of short-hand writing has been ascribed to Tiro, the favorite and accomplished freedman of Cicero, and the characters have been called Tironian Notes. According to Plutarch, it was so much in its infancy, that Cicero himself dictated the abbreviations and signs to be used on the particular occasion to which I have referred. At all events, we may be tolerably sure that the art is not so old as Funccius would have us believe, who assures us in his treatise, *De Scriptura Veterum*, that Adam was a skilful short-hand writer.

In the middle ages this kind of writing was much used, and several of the Anglo-Saxon manuscripts contain it. It is, I believe, by no means difficult to decipher. At least, so I was informed by that industrious Anglo-Saxon scholar, the late John Kemble.

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Great expectations were raised when the buried cities of Herculaneum and Pompeii were disinterred after their sleep of seventeen centuries, and a discovery was made of manuscript papyri at Herculaneum. These were calcined by fire and massed together, just as we see the leaves of a book which has been subject to the action of the flames. In fact, they were little more than cinders; but by means of a most ingenious process, which I believe was the use of an exquisitely thin circular saw, the leaves were separated, and the letters came out black, on the black but unshining paper. Sir Humphry Davy thought that he had discovered a chymical process by which the burnt leaves might be rendered legible; but after repeated experiments he was obliged to pronounce it a failure, owing to the injured state of the manuscripts.

Another process was to fasten to the outer edge of a MS. some threads of silk, which were wound round pegs in a small frame, and these

pegs were turned with the utmost precaution until the whole MS. [*volumen*] was unrolled. I remember reading in Dr. Wolff's journey to Bokhara that he describes a very similar process by which long worms, that had burrowed their way into his feet, were gradually extracted; the danger being lest any of them should break, which would have brought on inflammation, and possibly death.

The results, however, have not been satisfactory. A treatise of Philodemus on Music, written in Greek, although the author was a Roman and a contemporary of Cicero, was recovered, and a few fragments of other works; but I am not aware that any part of the lost writings of the great authors of Greece or Rome has as yet been found, either in Herculaneum or Pompeii. In vain has the learned world sighed for a discovery of the lost books of Livy and Polybius, and apparently it must continue to sigh in vain.

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I believe that scholars are by no means agreed as to which is the oldest known MS. in the world ; but it may safely be said that it will be found amongst the papyri recovered from the Egyptian tombs, dating as far back as the times of the Pharaohs.

In the Introduction to the great work of Silvestre *Sur la Palæographie Universelle*, which has been translated and published in this country by Sir Frederick Madden, the late keeper of manuscripts in the British Museum, it is said that Montfaucon, the well known Benedictine explorer of ancient manuscripts, had never seen a Greek MS. written in ink with a pen or calamus on papyrus or vellum, which was older than the fourth century of the Christian era. But Silvestre has published specimens of Greek uncial and cursive writing, which are as early as the third and second centuries *before* Christ. One of them is a letter from Dioscorides to Dorion, relating to complaints against the col-

lectors of the Egyptian exchequer for extortionate practices, just as we see letters in the *Times* at the present day complaining of the income-tax collectors. It consists of a single leaf of papyrus, and is assigned by Sir Frederick Madden to the third century before Christ. Another, in a character which can only doubtfully be called cursive, is a petition to King Ptolemy, relating to two twin-sisters employed in the temple of Serapis—not quite so ancient as the former one, but supposed to have been written in the second century before Christ. It is a papyrus, and was found, like the other, in Egypt. It is now in the Museum of the Louvre, in Paris. A fragment also of the Iliad, on papyrus, was discovered in 1825 in the island of Elephantine, in Upper Egypt, which is supposed to have been written in the time of the Ptolemies.

There are two remarkable fragments of manuscripts of the Iliad in England, one of which is ascribed to the first century before Christ. It

belongs to Mr. Bankes, and is a papyrus roll, containing the last book of the Iliad except the first 126 lines. The other is a palimpsest, written on vellum, and is in the British Museum. The upper or later text is Syriac, and probably of the ninth century; but the original writing beneath is in fine square Greek uncials, and contains about 4000 lines of the Iliad, written not later than the sixth century. I believe that at this moment the trustees of the British Museum are in negotiation for the purchase of a fragment of a MS. of the Iliad of the first century.

Montfaucon, indeed, believed that no MS. can be shown to be of an older date than a Greek MS. which is in the Imperial Library at Vienna. The date of this is, happily, placed beyond controversy by a subscription affixed to it, stating that it was written by the order of the Empress Juliana Anicia, B.C. 505, and amongst the embellishments there is a portrait of the Empress.

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But putting aside the few fragments that are supposed to be older than the Christian era, there can be no doubt that amongst the very oldest manuscripts in the world, must be placed those of Virgil and Terence in the Vatican. These are considered to be of even earlier date than the MS. of Dioscorides, and they have been generally ascribed to the fifth century. They are both illustrated. That of Virgil has been attributed by Mabillon and Winckelman to the time of Constantine the Great, and whatever the exact date may be, the Terence is nearly as old. Upon one of the leaves of the latter, the learned Politian wrote, "I, Angelo Politian, a man by no means incurious about antiquity, confess that I have never seen so old a MS." It is a square quarto of vellum, and ornamented with paintings. I may mention also the Livy in the Imperial Library at Vienna, which consists of 193 leaves, containing the books of the fifth Decade; written partly in uncial, and partly in

capital letters, without punctuation, and without division of words, both sure signs of antiquity.

There is still extant in the British Museum, a fragment of a MS. of the Book of Genesis, which, according to tradition, the fertile source of error, actually belonged to Origen; but is probably of the fifth or sixth century. It was almost destroyed by fire in 1731, but it formerly contained 250 pictures. In that curious repository of learning, the *Nouveau Traité de Diplomatique*, published by the Benedictines in 1757 (vol. iii. p. 59, n. 1), it is mentioned that Tertullian declares he had seen an autograph of St. Paul's Epistles. And I may notice in passing, that St. Paul seems to have written a bold, large hand. At least, so we may conjecture from the expression in Gal. vi. 11: "See *πηλικοῖς γράμμασιν* I have written to you with my own hand," which is improperly rendered in our translation, "See how large a letter I have written," whereas it really means "See in what

large characters I have written." St. Paul usually dictated his Epistles to an amanuensis, and to prevent forgery, he added the concluding benediction with his own hand, as in Rom. xvi. 22, 2 Theff. iii. 17, 18, 1 Cor. xvi. 21. In the same work, reference is also made to the anecdote told by Aulus Gellius, that there was extant in his time an autograph of Virgil's Second Book of the *Æneid*, which was fold for twenty little statuettes of gold. I need not say that no such manuscripts exist now. The learned authors of this work state that antiquaries do not ascribe any existing MS. to an earlier date than the third century; but they add that there are no certain proofs of so ancient a pedigree. There is or was at Venice, a copy of the Gospel of St. Mark, which, according to tradition, was written by the Evangelist's own hand. Of course this is a fable, but Montfaucon admits that he never saw a MS. which breathed a more venerable antiquity. It is a Latin text,

which is a tolerably conclusive proof that St. Mark had nothing to do with it, although some writers have asserted that the characters are Greek. It is written on papyrus and ornamented with silver.

To determine, however, the age of a MS., is one of the nicest questions with which the critical faculty has to deal, and although there are certain criteria of age which are familiar to the initiated, the antiquarian student is often guided rather by instinct, than by rules which he would be able to make intelligible to those who are not familiar with these dusty records. It is something like the instinct which enables a connoisseur in paintings to decide whether a picture is an original or a copy, and to assign it to a particular master.

Instead, however, of murmuring at the loss of ancient valuable manuscripts, we ought rather to be thankful that so many have been spared. When we consider the numerous causes of de-

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struction, such as fire, war, and wilful mischief, and, above all, the devouring tooth of time, *tempus edax rerum*, we may well wonder that the Libraries of Europe are so rich in these perishable records. There is a passage in Maitland's *Dark Ages* on this subject, which is worth quoting (p. 276):

“ If the reader has fairly considered the probable effects of wars and fires, aided by the more slow and silent, but incessant operations of Time, assisted by damp and all the auxiliaries which he has employed when the negligence of man has left manuscripts at his mercy ; if he has reflected that more than 600 years have elapsed since the close of that period of which we are now speaking, during all which time the work of destruction has been going on ; if he has at all realised these facts, surely I might confidently appeal to him whether it is very far short of a miracle that any manuscripts of that or of any earlier period should

“have survived to the present time.” (See also Palgrave’s *Hist. Normandy*, i. 421.)

There is another cause of the destruction of old manuscripts, and I am sorry to say that it must be laid to the charge of the bookbinders when the Art of Printing was discovered. I dare say that many of you have noticed, as I have often done, that if the leather cover of an old book becomes torn or rotten, there appears beneath a piece of parchment covered with writing. The truth is, that the binders used without mercy old manuscripts for the purpose, and they bought them by wholesale, knowing and caring little whether they contained some wretched monkish legend, or the lost books of the History of Livy.

One of the ablest critics of the last century, Oberlin, discovered several curious fragments in the covers of old books in the Library of the University of Strasburg, of which he was the keeper. Amongst these were leaves of Virgil, Horace, Ovid, Lucan, and Priscian; some an-

cient Dutch poems (not very valuable, I should think), and the German romances of Trifan and Barlaam. In a fimilar manner were found, in the Library of the Abbey of St. Germain des Prés, fourteen leaves of the Greek Epistles of St. Paul, now in the Bibliothèque at Paris, or rather there are only twelve, for two were destroyed or loft during the fire in the Library of the Abbey in Auguft, 1794. A copy of them has been published by Silvestre in his work *Sur la Paléographie Univerfelle*, and it is confidered one of the moft ancient and interefting of thefe monuments of antiquity. It is affigned to a period not later than the fixth century. It is a palimpseft, of which I fhall fpeak by-and-by, and feems to have been written over in the tenth or eleventh century. The original MS. of Magna Charta was refcued by Sir Robert Cotton from a tailor, who was on the point of cutting it up for meafures; and a ftory fomewhat apocryphal is told of the titles of the 8th, 10th, and 11th

Decades of Livy being found on some racket-bats at Saumur.

Pope Gregory I. is said to have burned all the MS. copies of Livy upon which he could lay his hands ; and the same work of destruction is attributed to Pope Gregory VII. with respect to the works of Varro, left Augustine, who had copied from that author a part of his treatise, *De Civitate Dei*, should be convicted of plagiarism. But two of the greatest calamities which befel the remains of classic literature were the fires which destroyed the library in the Basilica of the Greek emperors at Constantinople, and the library of Alexandria, if we may credit tradition ; but with respect to the latter, Gibbon says, “ I am strongly tempted to deny both the fact and the consequences.”

The oldest manuscripts are written in uncial letters, without any division of words or punctuation, or accents when the characters are Greek. I may mention in passing, that the origin of this

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word *uncial* is by no means clear, and has been the subject of some learned controversy. The distinction between *capital* and *uncial* writing is this. The letters in the former are for the most part vertical or horizontal, whilst in the latter they are chiefly rounded, and exhibit a tendency towards greater expedition in the style. Uncial writing was continued as late as the ninth century, when a curfive or running hand was introduced, and those who used it were called *tachygraphi*, or swift writers. In order to write straight, the scribes drew fine parallel lines with either some hard sharp instrument or lead; just as Pliny tells us the ancients used to do. *Argento, ære, plumbo, lineæ ducuntur.* (Hist. Nat. lib. xxxiii. 3, § 19.)

As regards the orthography of these ancient manuscripts, it is often extremely faulty. The Latin was corrupted by the ignorance of the monks, and words were written in a manner which would have horrified Cicero or Quintilian. I will mention a few of the most frequent errors.

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The letter b is substituted for p: thus we have *obtimus* for *optimus*; b for v, as in *vibens* for *vivens*, *cibitate* for *civitate*; e for t, as in *eeiam* for *etiam*; k or q for qu, as in *ki* for *qui*, and *equs* for *equus*; t for d, as in *set* for *sed*, and *quit* for *quid*. Letters are dropped out, as in *fibla* for *fibula*; *jusit* for *jussit*; *domni* for *domini*; and so on. Sometimes letters are transposed, as we find *quantam* for *tamquam*; *insula* for *inlusa*; *veles* for *leves*; and *esse* for *sefe*.

The abbreviations are at first very puzzling, and it requires some practice to interpret them. The letter S stands for several words, such as *Salutem*, *Signum*, *Sigillum*; P for *Pater*, *Pontifex*, *Papa*; F for *Frater*, *Filius*, and so forth. A.M. means *Ave Maria*; B.M., *Beata Maria*; D.B., *Dux Britanniae*; E.R., *Ecclesia Romana*; J.C., *Juris Consultus*; O.S.B., *Ordo Societatis Benedicti*; S.M.E., *Sancta Mater Ecclesia*. Double letters are used to indicate the plural, as A.N.N. for *anni*; D.N.N. for *Domini*;

O.O. for omnes ; P.P. for Patres, Papæ. With these, however, must not be confounded the F.F. to signify the Pandects, the origin of which is different.

The contractions also are numerous and embarrassing. Thus we have ms for minus ; dr for dicitur ; mo for modo ; ft for sunt ; tc for tunc, and a host of others.

The costly ornaments which were lavished on some of the old manuscripts show in what estimation they were held. They were, as Maitland says in his *Dark Ages* (p. 68), “illuminated
“and gilded with almost incredible industry,
“bound in or covered with plates of gold, silver,
“or carved ivory, adorned with gems, and even
“enriched with relics.” An Elector of Bavaria is said to have offered a town for a single MS. ; but the monks, considering that he could retake the town whenever he pleased, declined to make the exchange. Beccadelli wrote to Alfonso, King of Naples, and offered him for some books

of Livy 120 crowns of gold apiece. Gaguin, in France, authorised a friend at Rome to give 100 crowns of gold for a Concordance; and on the last leaf of a folio MS. of the *Roman de la Rose* is written in old French, "This book cost the "Palais de Paris" (*i.e.* I suppose the Palais de Justice) "40 crowns of gold *sans mentyr.*" The Abbot Angelbert gave to the Abbey of St. Regnier, in the year 814, a copy of the Gospels written in letters of gold, with silver plates marvellously adorned with gold and precious stones. The Emperor Henry II. presented to the Monastery of Monte Casino a copy of the Gospels covered on the side with gold and precious gems, written in uncial characters, and illuminated with gold. There is an Evangelium written in letters of gold in the Laurentian Library at Florence; and we have in the British Museum a Codex Aureus, which I advise you to go and look at as a marvel of beauty and penmanship. It is of the ninth century, and contains

the four Gospels. It is supposed to have belonged to Charlemagne. It is not gilded, but written with golden ink, the use of which dates back as far as the period of profane antiquity. One of the most beautiful specimens is the MS. containing the Latin Gospels, which was kept in the treasury of the Church of St. Médard at Soissons. And I may add that it was not uncommon to employ purple vellum, on which silver characters were written. I have, through the courtesy of Mr. Bond, the keeper of the manuscripts, seen one of these in the British Museum; but the silver has become oxydized, and the consequence is that the writing now is quite black. But it is unnecessary to pursue this part of the subject farther, for I dare say many who are now present have seen in different libraries of Europe splendid specimens of ancient manuscripts, adorned with gold and gems and brilliant colours.

Charles Lamb, in one of his essays, facetiously divided mankind into two distinct races—the men

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who borrow and the men who lend ; and he says that the most formidable alienators are your borrowers of books. “ Those mutilators of
“ collections, spoilers of the symmetry of shelves
“ and creators of odd volumes.” The old monks were very particular in this respect. As a general rule the greatest care was taken of the manuscripts of a monastery, and it was not an uncommon practice to anathematise any person who might steal it or remove it from the house. Thus we find written in Latin, in a MS. of some of the works of Augustine and Ambrose, in the Bodleian Library at Oxford :

“ This book belongs to St. Mary of Robertf-
“ bridge : whoever shall steal it, or sell it, or in
“ any way alienate it from the house or mutilate
“ it, let him be anathema-maranatha. Amen.”

And underneath is written, also in Latin, by another hand :

“ I, John, Bishop of Exeter, know not where
“ the aforesaid house is, nor have I stolen this

“book, but I have acquired it in a lawful way.”

Another of such subscriptions ends thus :

“Whosoever removes this Volume from this
“same mentioned Convent, may the anger of the
“Lord overtake him in this world and in the
“next to all eternity. Amen.”

In Selden's treatise *Ad Fletam*, he quotes a document relating to a loan of a MS. of Bracton, which was borrowed in the year 1277 by the Archdeacon of Scarborough from the Bishop of Bath, and which he promised to return on the Festival of St. John the Baptist in the following year. In testimony of which he says, “My seal
“is affixed to these presents.” Selden, *Ad Fletam*, 2, § 2.

I may here mention that once I had occasion to consult the late well-known physician, Dr. Chambers, and while waiting in his library I took down a book, in which I found written on a fly-leaf, “Hunc Librum Gulielmus Chambers,

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“Samueli Duckworth clam furripuit;” which would have been an awkward piece of evidence in a criminal court.

In the Descriptive Catalogue of materials relating to the *History of Great Britain and Ireland*, by Sir Thomas Hardy, Deputy Keeper of the Public Records, there is a very interesting account of the mode in which manuscripts were compiled in the old monasteries.

Attached to each monastery of any magnitude was a *Scriptorium*, or writing-room, in which the monks belonging to the house sat to copy whatever was given them by their superiors: not unlike the law-stationers at the present day. Some of the Anglo-Saxon monks were celebrated for their skill in penmanship, and amongst them Dunstan, of whom William of Malmesbury says that he was remarkably clever in writing and illuminating. A few charters in his handwriting now exist in the Bodleian Library at Oxford. Boniface on one occasion requested the Abbess

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Eadburga to cause a copy of the Gospels to be written in letters of gold and sent to him in Germany, that his converts might be impressed with a reverence for the Holy Scriptures. And a MS., written in letters of gold on purple vellum, was bestowed on York Minster by Wilfrid.

Artificial light from lamps or candles was not allowed in the Scriptorium, lest oil or grease or any other accident should damage the manuscripts, and stringent rules were in force to prevent idleness or inattention. Special artists were employed to insert the rubrics and design the embellishments, and all who have examined ancient manuscripts must have been struck with the extraordinary beauty of the workmanship of many of them. The general superintendence of the monks, while engaged in their literary task, was committed to the *armarius*, who seems to have acted very much like a modern librarian. He was responsible for the safe custody of the

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manuscripts; and if a book were borrowed by another monastery, he received a guarantee for its safe return, which sometimes consisted in the deposit of a book, *i.e.*, a MS. of equivalent value. In the year 1471, when Louis XI. borrowed the works of Rasis, the Arabian physician, from the Faculty of Medicine in Paris, he not only deposited as security a quantity of plate, but was obliged to get a nobleman to join with him in executing a deed by which he bound himself, under a heavy penalty, to return them.

The writing materials of the monks were parchment, ink, pen-knives, chalk, and pumice-stone for rubbing the parchment, awls to mark the lines, and a ruler and a plummet, the use of the last of which was as a weight to keep down the vellum, which, we know, would be apt to curl up.

In the Scriptorium, the rule of absolute silence prevailed, and there is a chapter in Martene the Benedictine, headed *De Silentio et Signis*, which gives the Regulations on the subject. Instead

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of speaking, the monks were to use certain signals. Thus, if one of them wanted a Missal or the Gospels, he was to make a sign of the cross; but if he wanted a pagan work, he was to scratch his ear with his hand like a dog, to show contempt for the Infidels. The sign for a tract was to lay one hand on the abdomen, and the other on the mouth, and for a Psalter, to place the hands on the head in the form of a crown.

In some of the larger monasteries there were, besides the large writing-room, smaller *scriptoria*, or “snuggeries,” where one or two persons at most could carry on their literary labours. These were generally appropriated to the more learned members of the community for the purpose of study and composition. And it was in such *scriptoria* that William of Malmesbury, Henry of Huntingdon, Roger of Wendover, Matthew Paris, and the Venerable Bede compiled their Chronicles. For the task of tran-

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scribing was by no means confined to the inferior monks, but there were many lordly Abbots and Priors of whom it might be said, as was said of Theodoric, Abbot of St. Evroul, in Normandy, in the middle of the eleventh century, in jingling verse :

Ipse manu propriâ scribendo volumina plura
Ecclesiæ natis dedit exemplum bonitatis.

Amongst these I might mention the name of Fulgentius, the Bishop of Ruspa, who was famed for his skill in the writer's art. A pleasing and graphic account of one of these *scriptoria* is given by Nicholas, the Secretary of St. Bernard.

“ Its door opened,” he says, “ into the apartments of the novices, where commonly a large number of persons, distinguished by rank as well as by literature, had put on the new man in newness of life. On the right was the cloister of the monks, appropriated to the recreation of the

“ more advanced part of the community. Here,
“ under the strictest discipline, they individually
“ opened the books of divine eloquence, not to
“ winnow out the treasures of knowledge, but to
“ draw forth the treasures of love, of compunction
“ and of devotion. On the left extended the
“ infirmary, and the place of exercise for the sick,
“ where their bodies, weakened and wearied by
“ the feverities of the rule, were refreshed with
“ better food, until cured, or, at least, restored
“ to better health, they rejoined the congregation
“ who laboured and prayed, did violence to the
“ Kingdom of Heaven and took it by force.
“ But it must not be supposed,” he continues,
“ that my little tenement is to be despised ; for
“ it is a place to be desired, and is pleasant to
“ look upon and comfortable for retirement. It
“ is filled with most choice and divine books, at
“ the delightful view of which I feel contempt
“ for the vanity of this world. This place is
“ assigned to me for reading, writing, and com-

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“ pofing ; for meditating and praying and adoring
“ the Lord of Might.”

“ Meanwhile along the cloifter’s painted fide,
The monks—each bending low upon his book
With head on hand reclined—their studies plied ;
Forbid to parley, or in front to look,
Lengthways their regulated feats they took :
The strutting prior gazed with pompous mien,
And wakeful tongue, prepared with prompt rebuke
If monk afleep in sheltering hood was feen ;
He wary often peeped beneath that ruflet fcreen.

Hard by, againft the window’s adverfe light,
Where desks were wont in length of row to ftand,
The gown’d artificers inclined to write ;
The pen of filver gliftened in the hand ;
Some on their fingers rhyming Latin fcanned ;
Some textile gold from balls unwinding drew,
And on ftained velvet ftately portraits planned ;
Here arms, there faces, fhone in embryo view
At laft to glittering life the total figures grew.”

I do not know how it may ftrike others, but
to my mind there is fomething very interefting
in the thought of thefe old monks purfuing their
filent labours in the darknefs of the middle ages,
and keeping alive the flickering lamp of learning

which without them, would have been hopelessly extinguished.

If I might venture upon a different illustration, I would compare the mediæval manuscripts to the planks of a wooden bridge thrown across the wide river of Time, and connecting the banks on either side, on one of which in the far distance stand the Acropolis of Athens and the Capitol of Rome, and on the other the printing presses of Modern Europe. The planks are broken, and rotten, and slippery, but without them there could be no passage over the yawning gulf. We must mourn indeed over the wretched perversity of taste which led them so often to efface the glorious remains of Greece and Rome, and write over them lying legends of fairs, or the dull records of monasteries; but they are hardly to be blamed for this which with them was a work of piety and conscience. For in those days it was thought a waste of time to copy the classic authors. He who did so, to

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quote the words of Johannes Sarisburiensis, was looked upon as "more sluggish than an ass and heavier than lead." *Non modo asella tardior, sed obtusior plumbo.* And we must remember that they did not toil for money or for fame, for they knew that in all probability the name of the humble scribe who copied the MS. would remain for ever unknown. It was with them only a labour of love or a call of duty, and let us be thankful that they performed it.

Special benefactions were from time to time made to these *Scriptoria* to defray the cost of vellum and to procure the transcription of manuscripts. Thus in the Evesham Chartulary it is stated that to the precentor belongs the manor of Hampton, from which he receives annually 5*s.*, besides 10*s.* 8*d.* from the tithes of Stoke and Alcafter, out of which he is to find all the ink and vellum for the scribes of the monastery, colours for illuminating, and whatever is necessary for binding the books. The *Scrip-*

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torium of a monastery at Bury St. Edmunds was endowed with two mills, and one at Ely with tithes and a messuage, “ad faciendos et emendandos libros.”

The diligence and industry of some of these old Monks were extraordinary. Thus Ortholonus, who was an inmate of a monastery at Ratibon, tells us in an account of his life that besides the books he copied to give away for the edification of those who asked for them, and of others to whom he gave them unasked, he copied nineteen missals, three books of the Gospels, two lectionaries, four service books, and a great variety of other books. Nor must we forget the Nuns. Diemudis, who lived towards the latter end of the eleventh century, in a double monastery at Wessobrun in Bavaria—*i.e.*, a monastery divided into two parts, one for monks, and the other for nuns—was a most exemplary scribe, and was celebrated for the beauty of her penmanship. I am really afraid to give a list of all the works

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which this holy maid wrote out with her own hand, for their number and magnitude almost exceed belief. But I may mention that they comprised two copies of the Bible, the Commentary of Origen on the Old Testament, the Letters, Treatises, and Confessions of St. Augustine, the Epistles of St. Jerome, and the Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius. We can hardly be surprised if excessive application to this kind of close work, sometimes affected the brain. In the *Gesta Abbatum* there is an account of a monkish scribe of some note whose head seems to have been turned by it, for he began to give himself strange airs—(*mirabiliter superbire*); and in order to take down his conceit, the Abbot had him flogged until the blood poured down from his body (*usque ad copiosam sanguinis effusionem*), but as this remedy failed, he was put into a cell and kept there in chains until his death.

The labour of the copyist was immense. It

has been feelingly described by our own William Caxton, “Thus end I this book : and for as
“moche as in wrytyng of the fame my peane is
“worn, myn hande wery and myn eyne dimmed
“with over moche lookyng on the whit paper
“and that age crepeth on me dayly—”

And when we see the printed edition of the work of some old author who wrote before the invention of printing, with its clear and luxurious type, we are apt to forget the labour and the skill that have been bestowed by scholars in recovering the text. Perhaps the MS. has been a palimpsest, or the leaves have been torn and mixed in glorious confusion ; for it is by no means uncommon to find manuscripts fastened in bundles with different subjects intermingled, just as if we cut up two or three books, shook the leaves in a bag, and then bound them in the same disorder.

Many, indeed most of the old manuscripts are, as might be expected, anonymous—that is, the

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name of the author or transcriber is unknown. And in the case of the monkish Chronicles the labour was performed by different hands at successive times, of whose names it generally happens that no record now remains. Sometimes, however, there occurs a notice of the writer, as, for instance, a sentence like the following in the Chronicles of St. Alban's :
"Dominus Rogerus de Wendover Prior aliquando de Belvero huc usque chronica sua digessit. Incipit frater Matthæus Parisiensis."

I dare say that many of you have read a very interesting book called *Monasteries of the Levant*, by the Honourable Robert Curzon, who visited the old convents of Egypt, Palestine, and Mount Athos, for the express purpose of discovering, and, if possible, collecting ancient manuscripts. The result was not very satisfactory, and the author says that "so thoroughly
"were these ancient libraries explored in the fifteenth century, that no unknown classic author

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“has been discovered, nor has any MS. been
“found of greater antiquity than some already
“known in the British Museum and other
“Libraries.”

We shall see, however, that there was at this time lying hid in an Eastern monastery one of the most precious treasures which has ever yet rewarded the zeal and industry of the explorer. One valuable MS. indeed, containing some of the lost works of Eusebius, Mr. Curzon did see in a convent of Abyssinian monks at Souriani amidst the Natron Lakes. But unfortunately for him he did not at the time know what it was, and as his saddle-bags were full of Coptic and Syriac manuscripts, fished out of the oil cellar, he left it behind. Since then, however, the whole of the manuscripts of the library of this convent have been purchased for the British Museum, and amongst them the MS. of part of the works of Eusebius in Syriac, the date of which is the beginning of the fifth cen-

ture, has been published at Cambridge by Dr. Lee.

I will now speak of a curious and important part of my subject, I mean the Palimpsests—the literal meaning of which is “twice-rubbed.” And it is applied to a MS. to signify that it has been twice cleaned or twice written—in fact, *rescribed*. The term was not unknown to the ancients, but it was generally used by them in a different sense from that in which we speak of it now. They applied it to leaves or books which were so prepared that one writing could be easily expunged to make room for another. But the modern use of the term is restricted to manuscripts upon which the original writing has been rubbed out to make room for a different work altogether, which, like an upper stratum, overlies the other, and on the application of acid, the older writing becomes faintly visible. Some critics, however, with good reason, think that the ancients did treat their MS. very much as

the monks did, and that palimpsests in the modern sense of the term, were perfectly well known to them. There is a passage in one of Cicero's letters which I need not now quote, but which seems to point to this conclusion ; and so it was considered by Cardinal Mai (*Ad Familiares*, vii. 18).

The ink generally used by the ancients was made of lampblack, mixed with gum. It was extremely black, and of great durability ; but it did not sink into the paper or parchment and so could be easily washed off by a wet sponge or cloth. We can readily imagine how this opened a door to forgery and fraud ; and Pliny tells us that it was usual in his time to mix vinegar with the ink, in order to make it combine chymically with the paper. This, he says, in some degree answered its purpose ; but afterwards vitriolic ink was substituted, which possessed the quality of sinking into the paper, but has the disadvantage of becoming paler and paler as time goes on,

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until, as the MS. grows yellow with age, it disappears altogether. Afterwards a compound kind of ink was made use of, in which the later and freshest looking manuscripts were written. The palimpsest manuscripts must have been written chiefly with vitriolic ink, for the words that had been rubbed out and written over are rendered legible by the application of an infusion of galls. It is possible that some manuscripts still exist which were originally written with the old carbonic ink, and contained precious remains of lost classics; but the writing in that ink was replaced by writing in vitriolic ink, and this again has been effaced by the pumice stone, and its place is occupied by the writing which now appears.

It is difficult for those who have not seen a real palimpsest to form an idea of the almost hopeless obscurity which shrouds and conceals the original MS.; and I know few greater triumphs of ingenuity and skill than have been

obtained by scholars who have devoted themselves to the arduous task of deciphering the originals. By-and-by I will exhibit some specimens in illustration of this.

The first rescribed or re-written MS. of which any important use was made seems to have been the Codex Ephrem, or Codex Regius of Paris, which was first pointed out for critical examination by the learned Montfaucon. The MS. is in a very mutilated state, and has now only 209 leaves, which are confused together and misplaced—with so many gaps or *lacunæ*, that sometimes scarcely a single word can be deciphered in a whole page. It contains parts of the works of Ephrem the Syrian, in Greek, in a character and style which have been assigned by critics to the sixth or seventh century. But below appears to have been written previously, in the MS. in its perfect state, the whole of the Old and New Testament, and from it the German scholar Wettstein collated all that could

be found in it of the text of the New Testament. I shall have occasion, however, to say more about this Codex before I conclude. The next discovery of an important palimpsest was made by Knittel, the Archdeacon of Wolfenbützel, in the middle of the last century. He found in a MS. of the *Origines* of Isidorus, under the more recent writing, the translation of the Epistle to the Romans into the Gothic language, made by Ulphilas, the Bishop of Gothland, in the fourth century; and with the help of another MS., called the Codex Argenteus, in the same library, so called from its being written chiefly in letters of silver, he was enabled to publish a tolerably perfect edition of the whole work in quarto.

Soon afterwards Paul Bruno discovered at Rome, in a palimpsest of the Vatican, a fragment of the 91st Book of Livy, containing a portion of the narrative of the war with Sertorius, in Spain. Dr. Barrett, also of Trinity College, Dublin, published in 1801 a

volume containing a great part of the Gospel of St. Matthew, written in uncial letters, which he copied from a palimpsest in the library of that college. This palimpsest appeared to have been re-written in the twelfth or thirteenth century, upon portions of much more ancient books.

But the greatest discoveries of palimpsests are due to the illustrious scholar, Cardinal Angelo Mai, who was born in Lombardy in the year 1779, and you will find an interesting account of him and his literary researches in Cardinal Wiseman's *Recollections of the Last Four Popes* (p. 484 to 487). He says:—

“ The peculiarity of Mai's wonderful discovery consisted in the reading of manuscripts twice written, or, as they are more scientifically called, palimpsest. A book, for instance, may have been very properly catalogued as containing the commentaries or sermons of some Abbot of the eleventh or twelfth century, works of which

“ there may be several other transcripts in the
“ library. Edited or not it is improbable that the
“ volume has been or will be looked into during
“ a generation. But the lens-like eye of a Don
“ Angelo peers into it and it becomes a treasure-
“ trove. The writer of the middle ages had
“ taken down from the shelves a work which he
“ considered of small value—perhaps there were
“ duplicates of it—some letters, for instance, of a
“ heathen emperor to his tutor, and had scrubbed,
“ as he thought, the parchment clean both of its
“ inky and of its moral denigration, and then had
“ written over it the recent production of some
“ favourite author. It is this under-writing that
“ Mai scanned with a sagacious eye ; perhaps it
“ was like the lines of a repainted canvas, which,
“ in course of time, came through the more
“ evanescent tints superadded, a leg or arm crop-
“ ping out through the mouth of an impassioned
“ head by the second artist ; and he could trace
“ clearly the large forms of uncial letters of the

“ fourth or fifth century sprawling through two
“ lines of a neatly written brevier ; or the scouring
“ had been more thoroughly done, and then a
“ wash of gallic acid revived the pallid reed-
“ strokes of the earlier scribe. Ingenuity, pa-
“ tience, learning, and immense perseverance were
“ requisite for the process. Often only uncon-
“ nected passages were found, half a sentence in
“ one page which the next did not continue, but
“ the rest of which might, perhaps, be found
“ in another MS. 300 numbers off ; sometimes
“ portions of various works were jumbled together
“ under one later production, upside down, back
“ to back like shuffled cards, while perhaps not
“ one page contained the ‘ Incipit,’ or the ‘ Ex-
“ pliciter feliciter liber I. de ——,’ so as to give a
“ clue to what these fragments contained. Learn-
“ ing was then, indeed, necessary ; for conjecture
“ often gave the first intimation of what had been
“ discovered, from the style or from the sentence
“ having been fortunately embalmed or petrified by

“ quotation in some later author. In this way did
“ Mai labour on ; looking through the tangled
“ mafs of confufed materials, catching up the ends
“ of different threads, and purfuing them with
“ patient diligence, till he had drawn each, broken
“ or perfect as it happened to exift. After one
“ minor publication of a palimpseft, he began in
“ 1813 and continued till 1819 to pour out an
“ unintermitting ftream of volumes, containing
“ works or portions of works, loft, as it was
“ fupposed, irrecoverably. Various orations of
“ Cicero ; the loft writings of Julius Fronto ; un-
“ published letters of Marcus Aurelius, Antoninus
“ Pius, Lucius Verus, and Appian ; fragments of
“ fpeeches by Aurelius Symmachus ; the Hiftory
“ of Dionyfius of Halicarnaffus, from the 12th
“ to the 20th Book ; inedited fragments of Philo ;
“ ancient commentaries on Virgil ; two books of
“ Eufebius ; Chronicles ; the Itineraries of Alex-
“ ander and of Conftantius Auguftus, fon of the
“ Emperor Conftantine ; three books of Julius

“ Valerius on the actions of Alexander the Great;
“ the 6th and 14th Sybilline Books; finally,
“ the celebrated Gothic versions, by Ulfilas, of
“ St. Paul and other parts of Scripture; such
“ were the principal works recovered and pub-
“ lished, with notes, prefaces, and translations,
“ by this indefatigable scholar at the period just
“ mentioned of six years. It was a work in which
“ he could have little or no assistance from others;
“ in fact, it was an art exclusively his own.”

To this account I may add what Cardinal Mai tells us of his first discovery of the three orations of Cicero :—“ Whilst I was examining these
“ manuscripts, I remarked that one which con-
“ tained some of the writings of Sedulius, a
“ Christian poet, was a palimpsest. ‘Immortal
“ God!’ I suddenly exclaimed, ‘what do I see
“ ‘at last? Behold Cicero! Behold the light of
“ ‘Roman eloquence surrounded with the basest
“ ‘darkness!’” and so forth.

In the list given by Cardinal Wiseman, he

does not mention the *De Republicâ* of Cicero, perhaps the most valuable of all the discoveries of Cardinal Mai. It was supposed to be hopelessly lost to the world, and in fact, practically was so, except in fragments preserved by quotations to be found in the writings of Lactantius, Augustine, Nonnius and others. But Mai found in a Palimpsest MS. in the Vatican, containing various treatises of St. Augustine, the long missing books of the *De Republicâ* buried underneath the lines of the MS. And in 1821, he published a printed edition of the work with copious notes and illustrations. It came to the Vatican, from the Abbey of St. Columbanus, at Bobio in Lombardy, and is supposed to be one of the oldest of the known Latin manuscripts. Indeed, Cardinal Mai refers it to the second or third century of our era. I may add also to the list, the discovery of several of the comedies of Plautus, and a fragment of the *Vidularia*, a

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comedy now lost. The ancient writing of this MS. is described as exceedingly beautiful, and it is supposed to be as old as the time of the Antonines. If so, it must be one of the very oldest manuscripts in existence. It was written over with part of the Old Testament in Latin, the characters of which are conjectured to belong to the seventh century.

I might mention other works which we owe to the indefatigable industry of Cardinal Mai, but I must hasten on to call attention to one of the most interesting and remarkable discoveries in palimpsests which have yet been made. I allude to the disinterment of the *Gaii Institutiones*, or Institutes of Gaius.

In the year 1816, the profoundly learned scholar Niebuhr, was on his way through Italy as Ambassador to the Papal See, and as he passed through Vienna, he strolled into the Chapter Library there and began curiously to examine some of the manuscripts. Amongst these, was

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one in which had been copied part of the writings of St. Jerome; but Niebuhr detected traces of an older writing beneath the lines, and was able to make out some words which satisfied him that they belonged to the work of a Roman Juris-Consult. He could only devote two days to the task, but in that time, with the lightning quickness of his critical intellect, he felt assured that the MS. was a palimpsest containing the lost work of Gaius. He immediately wrote to Savigny at Berlin, and communicated to him his discovery, the result of which we have now in a tolerably perfect edition of the Institutes of Gaius. The chymical agents employed brought out the original writing with sufficient clearness, but unfortunately the transcriber of the works of St. Jerome, who had used the old parchment for the purpose, had in several places erased words and passages with a knife, so that complete restoration was hopeless. I hold in my hand, Lachmann's edition of the work, at the end of

which are some *fac-similes* of the palimpsest. I may mention also, that in the same Library was discovered another palimpsest containing a fragment of the work of another old Juris-Consult, *De Jure Fisci*, or “The Rights of the Crown in respect of Property,” but it is in a miserably mutilated condition. And as I am here alluding to the recovery of the remains of ancient Roman writers, I may in passing, notice that the first complete copy of the Institutes of Quinctilian, was found by Poggio in 1414, buried beneath a heap of rubbish in the Monastery of St. Gall, in Switzerland.

After the discovery of the Institutes of Gaius, Professor Peyson found in the Public Library at Turin, a mutilated and undescribed MS. volume in large octavo, which on an attentive examination he ascertained to be a palimpsest. The visible writing on the surface, was a Latin version of a narrative of the exploits of Alexander the Great, written originally in Greek ;

but, by applying a proper acid, this writing was effaced, the more ancient characters below became legible, and they proved to be a fragment of the 6th Book of the Theodosian Code.

I will next say a few words on the almost inexhaustible subject of Biblical manuscripts, but I feel that it is something like an absurdity to attempt to deal with it even in the most rapid and perfunctory manner considering the limits within which I am necessarily confined. I could easily occupy your attention for several whole days on this most interesting part of my subject, and a lecture which should exhaust the question, might almost equal in length the Attorney-General's speech in the Tichborne case. I must therefore content myself with noticing only a few of the more salient points of the enquiry.

First, I will speak of the manuscripts of the Old Testament; but before doing so, let me mention the word *Masorah*, which you have so often seen in the margin of the sacred volume.

It has been pronounced to be the most stupendous monument in the whole history of literature of minute and persevering labour. The Masorites, were Jewish grammarians or literati, who lived after the commencement of the Christian era. They counted all the verses (which they originated), words, and letters of the 24 books of the Old Testament. They distinguished the verses where they thought something had been forgotten, the words which they believed were changed, the letters they thought superfluous, the repetitions of the same verses, the number of times that the same word is found in the beginning, middle, and end of a verse. All these they counted, and made an accurate enumeration of them, so that, if it is possible for human ingenuity to secure accuracy in the text of manuscripts it was secured by the crawling industry of the Masorites.

Now, as to the comparative ages of the existing Hebrew manuscripts of the Bible. I dare

not speak positively on a question about which many learned men differ, and I can only indicate the general opinion. One MS., which is a Pentateuch roll, unpointed, was brought from Derben or Daghestan, and if we may believe the subscription, was written previously to the year A.D. 580, and if so, it is the oldest known Biblical Hebrew MS. in existence. But consider this: the year 580 after Christ is the first starting point we have for an existing record. Beyond that all is darkness and void, so far as regards Hebrew properly so called.

The Hebrew manuscripts of the Bible are divided into two classes. (1) Rolls used in the Synagogue; and (2) Square ones, which are to be found in private collections. All the best manuscripts, are derived from five which are considered standards. (1) The Codex of Hillel, of unknown antiquity; (2) The Codex of Ben Apher; (3) The Codex of Ben Naphtali; (4) The Codex of Jericho; (5) The Codex of

Sinai, which, however, must not be confounded with the Codex Sinaiticus of Tischendorf, of which I shall speak presently. The rules laid down by the Jews with respect to their manuscripts are curious. They are to be written upon parchment, made from the skin of a clean animal, and tied together by strings of a similar substance. Each skin is to contain a certain number of columns of a precise length and breadth, with a certain number of words. They are to be written with the purest ink, and no word is to be written by heart, or with points; and they are first to be orally pronounced by the copyist. Before he writes the name of God, he is to wash his pen. In the Synagogue Rolls, no sort of illumination is allowed, but such embellishments are permitted in manuscripts for private use.

The Samaritan copy of the Pentateuch, written in capital letters in the peculiar character of Samaria, was discovered in the early part of the

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seventeenth century, having been lost for more than 1000 years. It is referred to by some of the Christian fathers, and amongst others by Origen and Jerome, but after the time of the last-named father no trace of its existence can be found until the year 1616 A.D. when Petrus a Vallé bought a complete copy of the MS. at Damascus, and it was sent to the Library of the Oratory in Paris. Between, however, the years 1620 and 1630, Archbishop Usher obtained from the East six additional copies of this Pentateuch.

The Editio Princeps of the Hebrew Bible was that printed at Sorreno in 1488, under the care of Abraham ben Cheyim. Only nine copies of this are known to exist, and the only two copies in England are in the Bodleian Library and the library of Exeter College, Oxford.

A collation or comparison of the ancient Biblical manuscripts was made successively by Matthias, Jablonski, Van der Hooght, Michaelis, and Houbigant; but all these were eclipsed

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by the labours of Dr. Kennicott, who published his first volume of the Scriptures in 1776, and his second in 1780. He and his coadjutors examined upwards of 600 Hebrew manuscripts and sixteen copies of the Samaritan Pentateuch. A few years afterwards Dr. Roffi, the Professor of Hebrew at Parma, published the various readings of 739 manuscripts, and 310 editions. He collated no less than 1346 manuscripts, and 352 editions, which contained altogether several hundred thousand various readings. And yet it is satisfactory to know that not one single doctrine of Revelation is affected by them.

There are more than 400 old manuscripts scattered over Europe and the East, which contain more or less of the Greek text—that is, the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament; but not ten of these contain the whole. Some of them comprise both the Old and the New Testaments; and amongst them precedence, in point of antiquity, must now be given to the

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Codex Sinaiticus, which was obtained by Tischendorf from the Convent of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai, in 1859. It contains a great part of the Old Testament, the whole of the New Testament, the Epistle of Barnabas, and part of the Shepherd of Hermas, and is assigned to the fourth century. The account which Tischendorf gives of this, his most important discovery, is so interesting that with your permission I will read a few passages.

“It was in April, 1844, that I embarked at
“Leghorn for Egypt. The desire which I felt
“to discover some precious remains of any
“manuscripts, more especially Biblical, of a date
“which would carry us back to the early times
“of Christianity, was realised beyond my ex-
“pectations. It was at the foot of Mount
“Sinai, in the Convent of St. Catherine, that I
“discovered the pearl of all my researches. In
“visiting the library of the monastery, in the
“month of May, 1844, I perceived in the

“ middle of the great hall a large and wide
“ basket full of old parchments, and the librarian,
“ who was a man of information, told me that
“ two heaps of papers like this, mouldered by
“ time, had been already committed to the flames.
“ What was my surprise to find amid this heap
“ of papers a considerable number of sheets of a
“ copy of the Old Testament in Greek, which
“ seemed to me to be one of the most ancient
“ that I had ever seen. The authorities of the
“ convent allowed me to possess myself of a third
“ of these parchments, or about forty-five sheets,
“ all the more readily as they were destined for
“ the fire. But I could not get them to yield up
“ possession of the remainder. The too lively
“ satisfaction which I had displayed, had aroused
“ their suspicions as to the value of this manu-
“ script. I transcribed a page of the text of
“ Isaiah and Jeremiah, and enjoined on the
“ monks to take religious care of all such
“ remains which might fall in their way

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“I resolved, therefore, to return to the East
“to copy this priceless manuscript. Having
“set out from Leipzig in January, 1853, I
“embarked at Trieste for Egypt, and in the
“month of February I stood, for the second
“time, in the Convent of Sinai. This second
“journey was more successful even than the
“first, from the discoveries that I made of rare
“Biblical manuscripts; but I was not able to
“discover any further traces of the treasure of
“1844. I forget: I found in a roll of papers
“a little fragment which, written over on both
“sides, contained eleven short lines of the first
“book of Moses, which convinced me that the
“manuscript originally contained the entire Old
“Testament, but that the greater part had been
“long since destroyed

“By the end of the month of January I had
“reached the Convent of Mount Sinai. The
“mission with which I was entrusted entitled me
“to expect every consideration and attention.

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“The prior, on saluting me, expressed a wish
“that I might succeed in discovering fresh sup-
“ports for the truth. His kind expression of
“goodwill was verified even beyond his expect-
“tations.

“After having devoted a few days in turning
“over the manuscripts of the convent, not with-
“out alighting here and there on some precious
“parchment or other, I told my Bedouins, on
“the 4th February, to hold themselves in readi-
“ness to set out with their dromedaries for Cairo
“on the 7th, when an entirely fortuitous cir-
“cumstance carried me at once to the goal of all
“my desires. On the afternoon of this day, I
“was taking a walk with the steward of the
“convent in the neighbourhood, and as we
“returned towards sunset he begged me to take
“some refreshment with him in his cell. Scarcely
“had he entered the room, when, resuming our
“former subject of conversation, he said, ‘And
“‘I too, have read a Septuagint, *i. e.* a copy of

“ ‘ the Greek translation made by the Seventy ; ’
“ and so saying, he took down from the corner
“ of the room a bulky kind of volume wrapped
“ up in a red cloth, and laid it before me. I
“ unrolled the cover, and discovered, to my great
“ surprise, not only those very fragments which,
“ fifteen years before, I had taken out of the
“ basket, but also other parts of the Old Testa-
“ ment, the New Testament complete, and, in
“ addition, the Epistle of Barnabas, and a part
“ of the Pastor of Hermas. Full of joy, which
“ this time I had the self-command to conceal
“ from the steward and the rest of the com-
“ munity, I asked, as if in a careless way, for
“ permission to take the manuscript into my
“ sleeping chamber to look over it more at
“ leisure. There by myself I could give way to
“ the transport of joy which I felt. I knew that
“ I held in my hand the most precious Biblical
“ treasure in existence—a document whose age
“ and importance exceeded that of all the manu-

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“scripts which I had ever examined during
“twenty years’ study of the subject. I cannot
“now, I confess, recall all the emotions which
“I felt in that exciting moment with such a
“diamond in my possession. Though my lamp
“was dim and the night cold, I sat down at
“once to transcribe the Epistle of Barnabas.
“For two centuries search has been made in vain
“for the original Greek of the first part of this
“Epistle, which has been only known through a
“very faulty Latin translation.

“ On the 27th of September I returned
“to Cairo. The monks and archbishop then
“warmly expressed their thanks for my zealous
“efforts in their cause, and the following day I
“received from them, under the form of a loan,
“the Sinaitic Bible, to carry it to St. Petersburg,
“and there to have it copied as accurately as
“possible.

“In the month of October, 1862, I repaired to
“St. Petersburg to present this addition to their

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“Majesties. The Emperor, who had liberally
“provided for the cost, and who approved the
“proposal of this superb MS. appearing on the
“celebration of the Millenary Jubilee of the
“Russian monarchy, has distributed impressions
“of it throughout the Christian world, which,
“without distinction of creed, have expressed
“their recognition of its value. Even the Pope,
“in an autograph letter, has sent to the editor
“his congratulations and admiration. It is only
“a few months ago that the two most celebrated
“Universities of England, Cambridge and
“Oxford, desired to shew me honour by confer-
“ring on me their highest academic degree. ‘I
“‘would rather,’ said an old man—himself of
“the highest distinction for learning—‘I would
“‘rather have discovered this Sinaitic manu-
“‘script than the Koh-i-noor of the Queen of
“‘England.’

“But that which I think more highly of than
“all these flattering distinctions, is the conviction

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“ that Providence has given to our age, in which
“ attacks on Christianity are so common, the
“ Sinaitic Bible, to be to us a full and clear light
“ as to what is the Word written by God, and to
“ assist us in defending the truth by establishing
“ its authentic form.”

The MS. is now in the Library at St. Petersburg.

Next to this ranks the Codex Alexandrinus in the British Museum, of which we have in the Temple Church printed copies, with a valuable preface by Mr. Cowper, giving an account of it.

This MS. formerly belonged to Cyril Lucar, at one time Patriarch of Alexandria, afterwards of Constantinople, where he was put to death by the Sultan. He presented it to our King, Charles I., in 1629, and it is now in the British Museum. The portion containing the New Testament is a volume measuring rather more than ten inches high and fourteen inches wide. The material is thin, fine, beautiful vellum, and

the writing is in uncial letters. The great age of the MS. has, in parts, caused the characters to fade to such a degree that they cannot be read without the aid of a lens and in a strong light, and the ferruginous nature of the ink has caused an infinite number of minute holes in the parchment, which give it the appearance of lace work. The first few pages are missing, and the existing MS. commences with the 6th verse of the 25th Chapter of St. Matthew. There is no regular division of words, and the punctuation is, to a great extent, arbitrary, and there are neither accents nor aspirates. It exhibits traces of varieties of penmanship, as though it had been transcribed by different hands, and it is the opinion of eminent critics that it was copied from several manuscripts, each containing a portion of the original text. I cannot go into the question of the mistakes in orthography, which are very numerous, but I may mention that as they mostly belong to what is called an

Alexandrian dialect, the presumption is that it was written in Egypt. Indeed, the tradition is that it was written by a noble Egyptian lady named Thecla in the fourth century. This MS. affords a good opportunity for noticing how an important doctrine may be affected by the question of a single letter. In 1 Tim. iii. 16, we read in our Bibles, "God was manifested in the flesh." Now as to the original of this, three various readings have been contended for. These are—

ο εφανερωθη

ος εφανερωθη

Θεος εφανερωθη

The first reading is certainly not that of the Codex Alexandrinus, for the *s* after the *o* is quite conspicuous. But whether the word is *os* or *Θεος* is very difficult to determine. It must be remembered that *Θεος* was generally written in a contracted form *Θs* with a horizontal line over the letters. The horizontal line is there in the MS.

now, but it is modern, and it is impossible to say whether it overlies a more ancient line or not. But is the capital letter Θ or O? On this depends whether the word is Θεός "God" or ος "who." I have examined the MS., but I do not presume to determine the question. I will, however, read what is said by Mr. Cowper in his introduction to the printed edition of the Codex Alexandrinus.

"The Θ consists of a circle tolerably well defined, and by the original scribe, but the transverse line is only what may be called a mere shadow, as if a pen almost dry had touched it, and that recently. So thin is the vellum, that the shadow, as we have called it, may really not be a portion of the letter, and probably no human eye will be ever able to determine whether the transverse line was originally there; that is, whether the scribe wrote omicron or theta." There is an interesting account of the actual state of this MS., in Cowper's Introduc-

tion to his edition of it, which I will read.
(Introduct. p. xviii.)

“ There is no doubt that the Alexandrine
“ Codex has suffered since it came into this
“ country. The New Testament has been read
“ and consulted far more than the Old, at all
“ times, and is therefore more worn. The work
“ of the binder we have already mentioned.
“ The critics and collators from Patrick Junius
“ downwards, have not at all handled it so care-
“ fully as they might have done. It is, however,
“ to *tempus edax rerum*, whose silent operation
“ has continued incessantly, that we would spe-
“ cially refer. Some things are now illegible,
“ which must have been visible even down to the
“ time when Woide made his transcript. He
“ himself noticed the difference of the Codex in
“ some particulars from what it had been at an
“ earlier date. The frequent manipulations to
“ which the volume was formerly subjected,
“ apart from direct contact with fingers, seems

“ to have caused minute particles of ink to fly off
“ in an impalpable and imperceptible powder.
“ To this process, Griesbach seems to allude in a
“ passage already quoted, when he says ‘ cursum
“ ‘ tantum inspexi, ne et tempus meum et ipsas
“ ‘ quoque membranas pretiosissimas inutiliter
“ ‘ contererem detereremque.’ Of course, not only
“ the ink, but the vellum itself has gone off in
“ the same form, adding to the number and mag-
“ nitude of the little holes above mentioned.
“ However gently the manuscript is handled, it
“ must be deteriorated, and should therefore only
“ be consulted for some really practical purpose.
“ The circumstance is to be regretted, but it is
“ inevitable and irremediable. We are glad to
“ know that the Codex is in wise hands, and that
“ it has been of late years more strictly guarded ;
“ and if those who have the keeping of it knew
“ how many minute lines, points, and particles
“ have vanished since the date of Woide’s edition,
“ they would feel, perhaps, even more than they

“do, the importance of the restriction. The fact
“that the volume is slowly suffering, is none the
“less real, because it can be ascertained only at
“comparatively distant intervals. However, it
“is gratifying to know that successive collations
“have determined almost every one of its read-
“ings, and indeed, all that can be determined :
“the value of these collations must increase as
“years elapse, and the difficulty and danger of
“reading the original increase.”

Next to the Codex Alexandrinus, is the Codex Vaticanus, which has been in the Library of the Vatican since the middle of the fifteenth century. It contains the Old and the New Testaments ; but after the 9th chapter of Hebrews, the rest of the books have been added at a somewhat later date.

Tischendorf assigns the Codex Vaticanus to a period earlier than St. Jerome ; that is, earlier than the latter part of the fourth century. He grounds this opinion on the form of the cha-

acters, the simplicity and variety of the punctuation, and the absence of larger uncial letters. The force of these reasons can only be appreciated by those who are learned in the lore of manuscripts.

The Codex is written in uncial or capital letters, with three columns on each page, and the colour of the ink and uniform shape of the letters, seem to prove that it was transcribed by one and the same copyist, who from certain peculiarities in spelling and language, is supposed to have been a native of Egypt. In many of its readings, it differs materially from the Codex Alexandrinus, and besides the loss of the portion of the New Testament as originally written, several parts of the Old Testament are now missing.

The fourth in order, which I shall notice, is, the Codex Ephrem, in what used to be called the Royal or Imperial Library of Paris. It is a palimpsest, and contains fragments of the Septu-

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agint and of every part of the New Testament. In the twelfth century the original writing was effaced, and some Greek writings of Ephrem Syrus, were put over it. It was brought from the East to Florence at the beginning of the sixteenth century, and was carried to Paris by Catherine de Medici, famous, or rather infamous, for the Massacre of St. Bartholomew.

It may interest you if I read Dr. Tischendorf's account of his successful attempt to decipher it. He says :—

“ There lay in one of the libraries of Paris
“ one of the most important manuscripts then
“ known of the Greek text. This parchment
“ MS., the writing of which, of the date of the
“ fifth century, had been retouched and renewed
“ in the seventh, and again in the ninth century,
“ had, in the twelfth century, been submitted to a
“ twofold process. It had been washed and
“ pumiced, to write on it the treatises of an old
“ father of the Church of the name of Ephrem.

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“ Five centuries later a Swiss theologian of the
“ name of Wetstein, had attempted to decipher
“ a few traces of the original MS. ; and, later
“ still, another theologian, Griefbach of Jena,
“ came to try his skill on it, although the
“ librarian assured him that it was impossible for
“ mortal eye to rediscover a trace of a writing
“ which had perished for six centuries. In spite
“ of these unsuccessful attempts, the French
“ Government had recourse to powerful chymical
“ re-agents, to bring out the effaced characters.
“ But a Leipzig theologian, who was then at
“ Paris, was so unsuccessful in this new attempt,
“ that he asserted that it was impossible to pro-
“ duce an edition of this text, as the MS. was
“ quite illegible. It was after all these attempts
“ that I began, in 1841-2, to try my skill at the
“ MS., and had the good fortune to decipher it
“ completely, and even to distinguish between
“ the dates of the different writers who had been
“ engaged on the MS.”

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To the Codex Vaticanus, the Codex Alexandrinus, and the Codex Ephrem, must be added the Codex Frederic Augustus, discovered by Tischendorf, and published by him in 1846. He found it in an Eastern monastery amidst torn and tattered fragments, "*in abjectis lacerorum reliquiis.*" It is, I believe, now in the Library at Leipzig. It contains only fragments of the *Old Testament*, and until the Codex Sinaiticus was discovered, was believed to be the oldest MS. of the Greek Testament in existence. Tischendorf called it a *Codex omnium qui in Europa supersunt facile antiquissimus*. It consists of forty-three folios, or eighty-six pages of very thin vellum, written with tawny coloured ink. Tischendorf is disposed to assign to this MS. as high an antiquity as the early part of the fourth century.

But here I must stop. I have already enumerated the most important manuscripts of the New Testament text, and I have not time to mention

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the great variety of originals or palimpsests which contain fragments of the Greek Scriptures. I will only specify one of them, the Codex Bezaë, so called because it was presented to the University Library at Cambridge by Beza in 1581. He procured it, in 1562, from the monastery of St. Irenæus at Lyons. It is on parchment, and contains the Gospels and Acts, with a Latin version. It is thought to have been written in France, and by a Latin transcriber, who was ignorant of Greek. I believe that in point of authority it ranks very low ; but as to its age it is supposed to have been written in the latter end of the fifth or sixth century.

I will in conclusion say a few words about *Versions*, a word so often met with in books, but not always accurately understood.

A version is in fact nothing but a translation. It is the rendering of an original MS. into another language. The books of the New Testament were originally written in Greek,

unless indeed we except that of the Gospel of St. Matthew, as to which there are strong grounds for believing that the original was Hebrew or Aramaic. Before very long the original documents were translated into the vernacular of different nations. Of these seven belong to the East, and five to the West. The Eastern versions are the Egyptian, the Ethiopian, the Arabian, the Armenian, the Georgian, the Persian, and the Syrian. The Western are the Latin, the Gothic, the Slavonic, the Anglo-Saxon, and the Frankish. But although all these are of great antiquity, they are by no means of equal value; and with regard to some of them it is by no means certain that they were direct translations from the original Greek and not the translations of a Latin translation. I cannot, of course, attempt here to go into the question of the reasons why some are more valuable than others: and I must content myself with stating that there are four versions of

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paramount authority—the Syriac, the Egyptian, the Latin, and the Gothic.

These old versions enable us to test, to a certain extent, the accuracy of the manuscripts which profess to be copies of the original Greek, and to determine between various readings which is likely to be the true one. For instance, suppose that there is a word or passage in which they differ from each other,—by turning to the translation we can often decide, with tolerable accuracy, what was the word or passage which the translator had before him, and thus in imagination restore the text, although the MS. which contained it has long since mouldered into dust.

The Syriac version is believed to have been made in the second century; the Egyptian in the third, and in three dialects, of which that of Memphis only has been found, except in some fragments of extremely old manuscripts.

The Latin version is the well-known Vulgate,

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which was executed by St. Jerome in the latter part of the fourth century (about 383 A.D.), at the bidding of Pope Damasus. It was not publicly, and if I may so speak, officially sanctioned by the Holy See until the year 1592, when Clement VIII. was Pope. I should be very sorry to get into a controversy with Roman Catholics as to the genuineness of the text, but I cannot help mentioning that Tischendorf, the greatest living authority on the subject of manuscripts, says that it differs considerably from the original translation of Jerome, as is proved by a comparison of it with the oldest existing manuscripts. The most ancient of these is the Codex Armentinus, in the library at Florence, and the date assigned to it is the middle of the sixth century, less than two hundred years after the original MS. written by St. Jerome.

Before he undertook his translation of the Old Testament, there was in existence a Latin

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version, which had been made from the Septuagint. But he resolved to revise the text in conformity with the original Hebrew, and his bold attempt met with the fiercest opposition. Even St. Augustine endeavoured to deter him. Men were afraid that injury might be done to the faith if a new version were made from a different text from that which was in common use. But Jerome persevered. He says, "I could afford to despise them, if I stood upon my rights, for a lyre is played in vain to an ass;" and the result was that he produced a translation, which gradually won its way, and at last came into such universal use that it was known by the name of the Vulgate.

The Gothic version was a translation directly from the Greek, made by Ulphilas, the Bishop of Gothland, in the middle of the fourth century. Three of the manuscripts containing fragments of it are palimpsests.

One word more as to the use of these versions.

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Of course they are inferior to exact copies of the originals in the same language. But where the originals no longer exist, and in the case of the New Testament no such now do exist, they are extremely useful in checking, so to speak, the accuracy of what purport to be copies.

The history of the Septuagint version is involved in much obscurity. The old tradition which was for a long time explicitly believed, was that seventy-two learned Jews were selected by King Ptolemy, in Alexandria, and that to them was committed the task of translating the Old Testament into Greek. This is the account given by Aristæus, in a letter addressed to his brother Philocrates, and it was accepted as truth for many ages. But modern criticism has refused to accept the narrative as true. Bentley called the Aristæus story "a clumsy cheat;" and all that can be assumed as tolerably certain is that the version was made at Alexandria in the time of the earlier Ptolemies,

